(c) if so, to what extent they have started implementing the projects?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) The declaration is a statement of intent at this stage. This will come into effect after in depth study by all countries concerned of their technical, commercial and security implications.

Ganga-Bhagirathi-Hooghly National Waterway system

*255. SHRI SHANKAR ROY CHOWDHURY: Will the Minister of SHIPPING be pleased to refer to the answer to Unstarred Question 1606 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 4th August, 2003 and to state:

(a) the details of infrastructural facilities created as on date on the Ganga-Bhagirathi-Hooghly National Waterway system and their location;

(b) the volume and type of river traffic on the National Waterway system; and

(c) the river ports selected for development into major inland Waterway terminals and the infrastructure created at each terminal?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) The details are as under:

(i) Navigable channel with 2 meter depth on Haldia-Patna stretch and 1.5 meter depth on Patna-Varanasi stretch.

(ii) Day navigation marks between Haldia and Varanasi.

(iii) Night navigational aids between Tribeni and Farakka.

(iv) Floating terminals at Haldia, Kolkata, Karagola, Bhagalpur, Munger, Patna, Chunar, Varanasi and Allahabad.

(v) Permanent terminals at Haldia, Kolkata, Pakur and Farakka.

(b) The cargo traffic on National Waterway No. 1 during 2003-04 was 159 million-tonne-kms. comprising of cement, general cargo, rice, wooden logs, petroleum oil and lubricant, fly ash, pulses, stone chips, foodgrain, wheat, sugar, salt, dry fish, coal, iron ore, manganese ore etc.

(c) Haldia, Kolkata and Patna are the major Inland Water Transport centres on National Waterway No. 1. At Haldia, a floating jetty with mechanical handling facility and storage facility exists. Besides, jetty of Haldia Dock Complex is used for IWT purposes. At Kolkata, IWT terminals with mechanical handling facility/storage facility exist at TT Shed and Jagarnath Ghat. At Patna, a floating jetty is operational and construction of a permanent RCC terminal is in progress.

Postal facility in Gram Panchayats

*256. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA:
SHRIMATI SARLA MAHESHWARI:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the number and percentage of Gram Panchayats in the country which are devoid of post offices, State-wise;

(b) the details of the norms set up for fulfilment in the matter of distance, population, income and availability of resources; and

(c) the action proposed to open more village post offices for rural people?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI DAYANIDHI MARAN): (a) to (c) The number and percentage of Gram Panchayats which are devoid of post offices in the country, State-wise as on 31.3.2003 are given at Statement-I (*See* below). Post offices are opened subject to distance, population and income norms and under Annual Plan. The details of these norms are given at Statement-II (*See* below).

India has the largest postal network in the world and 89% of the post offices are located in rural areas. 7697 Panchayat Sanchar Sewa Kendras have also been opened in those Gram Panchayats which fulfil only distance and population norms, as Panchayat Sanchar Sewa Kendras provide an alternate and economical means of providing basic postal facilities in the villages. The postal network in India provides daily delivery of dak to customers at their doorstep in any part of the country, collects letters from villages through Letter Boxes, and even sells stamps and stationery in rural areas to customers at their doorstep.